



## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**July 27, 2023**

### **U.S. Senate passes RECA bill as Navajo Nation leaders advocate on Capitol Hill to help former Navajo uranium miners and downwinders**



Speaker of the 25th Navajo Nation Council Crystalyne Curley was joined by Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren, Sen. Ben Ray Lujan, Former Uranium Worker Phil Harrison, and Navajo Nation Washington Office Executive Director Justin Ahasteen as they advocated on Capitol Hill for a long-term extension and expansion of benefits under RECA.

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Speaker of the 25th Navajo Nation Council Crystalyne Curley, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, and the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee led a successful series of meetings with Congressional members on Capitol Hill this week, to continue fighting for a long-term extension and expansion of benefits under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), which is set to expire in July 2024.

RECA was first enacted in 1990, then amended in 2000, to provide one-time compensation to the veterans of and communities impacted by America's uranium industry and nuclear development program.

Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández (D-NM) and U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) introduced H.R. 4426 and S. 1751, respectively, to provide for the inclusion of post-1971 uranium workers and core drillers, the extension of RECA to 2040, the addition of renal cancer as a compensable illness, allowance of combined work histories, expansion of downwind eligibility areas, provide medical benefits and increase compensation for atmospheric testing claimants, including downwinders, acceptance of affidavits for work history, physical presence,

and onsite participation, and calls for an Epidemiological Impact Study on uranium miners and miller families and others exposed outside of work setting.

On Thursday afternoon, the President Nygren and Speaker Curley were in Washington, D.C., as the U.S. Senate voted and passed the RECA expansion and extension bill as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Senate is expected to vote on the NDAA late Thursday.

“We had a very strong presence on Capitol Hill with the voices of the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, who shared the hardships and setbacks that they’ve dealt with for many years. The Senate’s vote today demonstrates the impact that we can have when leaders and communities speak with a united voice. My colleagues of the 25th Navajo Nation Council have also been very supportive and instrumental in advocating for RECA. We are very grateful to Sen. Luján for meeting with us and moving the bill forward. Next, we need the support of the House members to push the RECA amendments across the finish line,” said Speaker Curley.

Members of the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, a grassroots group led by Phil Harrison, accompanied Speaker Curley and President Nygren as they met with congressional members and to share their personal stories of the heartache and health issues that many former Navajo mine workers and their families suffer from to this day.

On Thursday, Speaker Curley, Congresswoman Leger Fernández, and Harrison spoke in support of the RECA bill during a press conference hosted by the Navajo Nation Washington Office. Navajo Nation leaders will continue advocating for the passage of the RECA amendments by Congress.

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